An author writes an argument essay to demonstrate the writer’s position, belief, or conclusion in a reasoned, logical way. Argument writing is organized much like expository/informative writing. An argument essay is characterized by:

- An *introduction* that clearly states the claim (or thesis) based on the author’s point of view relative to the issue being raised.
- At least several paragraphs, each presenting a *main reason* as well as supporting *evidence*.
- A *conclusion* paragraph that restates the claim or thesis.

Here is a graphic organizer that will help you to craft an argument piece:

**THE ARGUMENT PILLAR**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>INTRODUCTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lead/Claim Statement</td>
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<th>Main Reason #1</th>
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<th>CONCLUSION</th>
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As the author of an argument essay, your goal is to influence or affect a reader’s point of view, to bring about some action, to appeal to the reader to accept your explanation, evaluation, or conclusion relative to a concept, issue, or problem. The purpose and goal is to motivate the reader to acknowledge that your argument is valid and deserves consideration.

In order to accomplish this you must always be aware of the opposing view. While making each argument, you must be careful not to suggest that an alternate point of view or opinion is foolish, unreasonable, or wrong. (How would you feel if, during a discussion, someone told you your idea was just plain silly? Would you be likely to continue to listen?)

Instead, as the author, you must acknowledge opposing ideas or opinions and then thoroughly explain the logic of your own point of view. A successful writer of argument presents his/her arguments/reasons in a reasonable, logical, nonjudgmental way. In order to be convincing, you must anticipate, address, and refute each opposing argument, much the way a lawyer builds a case. As an effective argument writer you must enable the reader to clearly see and understand your point of view. Your point of view or claim should be based on strong reasons and solid information in order to be convincing. You must give your reader the opportunity to stand in your shoes and to see the situation through your eyes.

SO, STRONG ARGUMENT WRITERS WILL:

• Present and explain their claim clearly through a strong organizational plan.

• Acknowledge alternate points of view.

• Demonstrate what the reader has to gain by thinking as they do.

• Show what the reader has to lose by supporting the opposing view.

• Use vivid, specific language, and powerful evidence.

• Elaborate with quotes, statistics, and anecdotes.
Argument writing is best built upon a solid foundation in expository/informative and opinion writing. Students who have a strong grasp of the organization, purpose, and range of skills necessary for powerful exposition will be able to translate and apply these to argument writing. In fact, the over-all organizational structure of an argument essay closely aligns with that of the expository/informative essay.

In expository/informative writing, the graphic organizer students use is the **Expository/Informative Pillar**. The expository/informative piece is crafted with a broad introduction containing an attention-grabbing lead followed by a topic sentence, the body of the piece (usually 3 or more paragraphs, each with a broad yet distinct main idea and backed up with a variety of powerful details) and then a conclusion that creatively restates each main idea.

When crafting an argument essay, students will use the **Argument Pillar (pictured on p. 2)**. It is essentially the same as the expository/informative pillar, except that instead of a topic sentence in the introduction, the writer will need to state a claim and have a thesis statement explaining how the claim will be argued, and in place of the main ideas in the body of the piece, will construct supporting reasons backed with evidence. In the conclusion paragraph the author must restate the main thesis and indicate how the thesis was argued. In addition, the strong argument writer will apply a number of elaboration skills that will help state their claim, support it with reasons and back up with convincing evidence. These techniques build upon the basic elaboration skills mastered in expository/informative writing. (See sections 2-4)

On the next page is an at-a-glance chart that compares the salient characteristics of expository/informative and argument writing, side by side. This is an excellent “bridge tool” for students who are transitioning from expository/informative to argument writing for the first time.

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**THE EXPOSITORY/INFORMATIVE PILLAR**

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<td>Organization</td>
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<td>Purpose</td>
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Alternate Point of View: The ideas, beliefs, and opinions held by someone who feels differently about an issue than you do.

Anecdote: A short, concise story used to illustrate a point.

Argument Pillar: The graphic organizer authors may refer to which will provide shape and structure to their argument writing. This is a guide to help authors organize well and fully elaborate their thoughts.

Audience Awareness: The author of a successful argument piece must possess audience awareness - an understanding of differing points of view, and a sensitivity in acknowledging these views.

Call to Action: Sometimes found in the conclusion paragraph of an argument essay, a “call to action encourages the reader to do something. It might be to simply take a stand on an issue, or might be a request to join a group, take up an activity, speak out, or otherwise do something that supports the author’s point of view.

Claim: An attitude, opinion or particular stand on an issue.

Con: A position against or opposing a particular issue (opposite of “pro”).

Conclusion: The final paragraph in an argument essay in which the author restate each argument, highlighting or remphasizing the strongest point, and presents a “call to action.” (See above.)

Connotation: The implied or suggested meaning of a word or phrase.

First-hand evidence: Evidence you gather yourself such as through a survey, experiment, or personal experience.

Introduction: The first paragraph in an argument essay which contains an attention-grabbing lead on the author’s claim.

Issue: A matter of importance that needs to be examined and resolved.

Issue Statement: A sentence in an argument essay that presents the issue to be examined, or the question placed before the audience for consideration.
Lead: Generally the opening sentence in the introduction of an argument essay which is designed to grab the reader’s attention and encourage them to read on.

Main Reason: A compelling reason to agree with the author. An argument essay needs at least several specific, well-developed reasons (one for each paragraph in the body of the piece) that are broad enough to develop with a variety of supporting details or evidence, and are distinct from the other main reason within the piece.

Point of View: A specific opinion or perspective on an issue.

Position: An attitude, opinion, or particular stand on an issue.

Pro: A position in support of or in favor of (for) a particular issue (opposite of “con”).

Quote: To cite the words of an expert on a subject - a direct quote involves the use of quotation marks and a “tag”. Ex. Selma Smith, executive assistant says, “It is critical to back up verbal requests with a written note.”

Second-hand evidence: Evidence generated through research.

Statistic: Information presented as a number, ratio or percentage used as evidence to support a position.

Testimonial: An anecdote from an expert or a respected individual used as evidence that supports a point of view.

Tone: The predominating mood, feeling, attitude or sentiment of a piece of writing, reflected through word choice, connotation, and style. (A piece might be serious, humorous, sarcastic, foreboding, optimistic, etc.)
Analyze a Strong Piece of Argument Writing: Rise and Shine

Objective: Students read, annotate, and begin to recognize the salient features of a strong piece of argument writing.

Procedure:

1.) Reproduce a copy of *Rise and Shine*, pp. 36-37, as well as the *Guiding Questions* p. 40, for each student.

2.) Explain that they will be analyzing a strong piece of argument writing that uses techniques they will be learning. Ask them to read along as you read aloud. You might also invite some strong oral readers to read a paragraph or two aloud for the class.

3.) Using the annotated teacher’s copy on pp. 38-39, point out the various techniques the author used, as noted. Project to annotate/label the highlighted skills. Instruct students to annotate or label their copy of the piece along with you. Discuss each skill as it arises.

4.) Direct their attention to the *Guiding Questions* on p. 40. As a class, discuss and work through these together.
Rise and Shine?

The alarm blares. I roll over, cover my head with a pillow. It’s time to get up for school, but I’m exhausted. For middle school students the school day begins early – by 7:20. So, I drag myself up, throw on some clothes, grab something to eat and try to make it to the bus stop on time. The question is, should middle schools begin their day so early. Realistically, might we consider beginning middle school classes a little later?

Fact: as children enter adolescence they require more sleep. Their bodies and their psyches are going through many changes and sleep is necessary to replenish and nourish them through this process. The demands of homework and school activities often keep these same students up late at night, stealing precious minutes, even hours of sleep. Scientific studies have shown that the biological clocks of kids in the 11-14 age bracket change with the onset of puberty. Their natural inclination is to stay up later at night and sleep later in the morning. This is a switch from the first 10 years of life where children wake up early bounding with energy. Considering this biological reality, it makes sense to provide middle schoolers with the sleep and schedule best suited to their needs. Without a doubt, starting the school day at 8:45 would be beneficial to the health, attitudes and academic progress of middle school students. Further, it would be a welcome change for teachers who must fight for the attention of their sleepy first-period students and parents sick of struggling to get their sons and daughters out of bed on time.

One reason that middle and high schools begin their days early and elementary schools begin later is to allow school buses to time to drop off the older kids, and then make a second trip for the elementary schoolers. While I can understand the problems school systems have with scheduling a limited number of busses transporting a lot of kids, the simple solution might be to just reverse the route. Pick up the elementary school students first -- after all, they are usually up by 6:00 AM anyway – then come.
back for the older students. Elementary school can begin at 7:20 and end at 2:10. The younger children would enjoy more time after school for healthy outdoor play while the older students reap the benefit of extra sleep.

Some may believe that older students must get out of school earlier to get to after school jobs on time. This might be a relevant argument for highschoolers but middle school students can’t get regular jobs anyway. Those who baby-sit usually do so on evenings or weekends, not in the early afternoon. Furthermore, most part time job shifts begin at 5:00 or 6:00. My older brother has worked as a counter helper at McDonald’s and a stocker at American Eagle and he never had to be in before 5:00. In fact, cooperating with their natural sleep rhythms and getting enough rest will contribute to greater job productivity, less absenteeism and better concentration. Along with teachers, parents and the middle school students themselves, employers will benefit when their young workers get proper rest.

National studies have concluded that about 80% of all young adolescents get less than the recommended nine hours of sleep at night. Alarmingly, the same study concluded that 10% of all teenagers get less than six hours of sleep at night. The consequences of chronic sleep deprivation can be serious and a simple solution to this problem is to start middle school later. Easy for bus schedules to accommodate, this simple change can alleviate stresses on parents, teachers, and middle-school students.
Rise and Shine?

1.) The alarm blares. I roll over, cover my head with a pillow. It’s time to get up for school, but I’m exhausted. For middle school students the school day begins early – by 7:20. So, I drag myself up, throw on some clothes, grab something to eat and try to make it to the bus stop on time. The question is, should middle schools begin their day so early. Realistically, might we consider beginning middle school classes a little later? 

2.) Fact: as children enter adolescence they require more sleep. Their bodies and their psyches are going through many changes and sleep is necessary to replenish and nourish them through this process. The demands of homework and school activities often keep these same students up late at night, stealing precious minutes, even hours of sleep. Scientific studies have shown that the biological clocks of kids in the 11-14 age bracket change with the onset of puberty. Their natural inclination is to stay up later at night and sleep later in the morning. This is a switch from the first 10 years of life where children wake up early bounding with energy.

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3.) One reason that middle and high schools begin their days early and elementary schools begin later is to allow school buses to time to drop off the older kids, and then make a second trip for the elementary schoolers. While I can understand the problems school systems have with scheduling a limited number of busses transporting a lot of kids, the simple solution might be to just reverse the route.
Pick up the elementary school students first -- after all, they are usually up by 6:00 AM anyway – then come back for the older students. Elementary school can begin at 7:20 and end at 2:10. The younger children would enjoy more time after school for healthy outdoor play while the older students reap the benefit of extra sleep.

4.) Some may believe that older students must get out of school earlier to get to after school jobs on time. This might be a relevant argument for highschoolers but middle school students can’t get regular jobs anyway. Those who baby-sit usually do so on evenings or weekends, not in the early afternoon. Furthermore, most part time job shifts begin at 5:00 or 6:00. My older brother has worked as a counter helper at McDonald’s and a stocker at American Eagle and he never had to be in before 5:00. In fact, cooperating with their natural sleep rhythms and getting enough rest will contribute to greater job productivity, less absenteeism and better concentration. Along with teachers, parents and the middle school students themselves, employers will benefit when their young workers get proper rest.

5.) National studies have concluded that about 80% of all young adolescents get less than the recommended nine hours of sleep at night. Alarmingly, the same study concluded that 10% of all teenagers get less than six hours of sleep at night. The consequences of chronic sleep deprivation can be serious and a simple solution to this problem is to start middle school later. Easy for bus schedules to accommodate, this simple change can alleviate stresses on parents, teachers, and middle-school students.
Analyzing “Rise and Shine?”

1.) Number each paragraph. Circle the introduction and box the conclusion.

2.) What is the ISSUE raised in this piece? ________________________________

3.) Underline each main reason and write a blurb in the margin explaining what the entire paragraph is about.

4.) What is the author’s claim ________________________________

5.) Fill in the author’s plan:
   Claim ________________________________
   Supporting Reason #1 ________________________________
   Supporting Reason #2 ________________________________
   Supporting Reason #3 ________________________________

6.) Paragraph #2 begins with a fact. Why is this fact relevant to the author’s position? ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

7.) Read this fact: A recent study showed that adults who average less than 6 hours sleep a night are at a greater risk of heart disease than adults who sleep 7-8 hours a night. Should the author include this evidence in this piece? Does this fact support the author’s claim? Explain why or why not. ________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

8.) Read paragraph 4 and underline the evidence taken from personal experience?

9.) What statistics are offered in the concluding paragraph? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
Objective: will recognize that in argument writing the author raises an issue. The author also recognizes and acknowledges both point of views – pro and con.

Procedure:

1.) Reproduce and distribute pp. 59-60. Project these pages.

2.) Begin by reading through p. 59 which outlines the issue: Whether to restore or tear down the run-down Victorian buildings in Eastville. Point out that the issue as well as each author’s position and main arguments are listed. (A summary or basic plan for each author’s piece.)

3.) Read Tom Green’s letter on pp. 60-61 and discuss the analysis questions with the class. On another day, follow the same procedure for Jessica Ramirez’s letter - pp. 67-68. Project each piece to keep the class focused and to annotate the letters as suggested in the corresponding questions.

4.) After the class has read and analyzed both letters, discuss the Think About It section on p. 73. They can begin to determine what they found most effective, and to decide if anything the author said compels the reader to consider another point of view.

Important Vocabulary:

- **Issue**: a matter of importance to be examined.
- **Point of View**: a specific opinion or perspective on an issue.
- **Claim**: an attitude, opinion, or particular stand on an issue.
- **Pro**: a position in support of or in favor of (for) a particular issue (opposite of con).
- **Con**: a position against or opposing a particular issue.
Pro or Con? What’s Your Claim?

The town of Eastville is considering tearing down three old Victorian buildings in the center of town. These buildings once housed stores, but they have not been well maintained, and will require at least a million dollars to restore them properly. The question is, should the town finance the restoration of these buildings, or tear them down to make room for a park? Read the following Letters to the Editor arguing whether or not the buildings should be destroyed.

The first author claims that the buildings should be restored.

• Reasons they should be restored:

1.) They have historic value and add charm and style to the town.

2.) Restoring these buildings would promote downtown business.

3.) A park in place of these buildings would do little to preserve the environment.

The second author claims that they should be torn down in favor of a park.

• Reasons to tear them down for a park:

1.) Restoration would be costly and dangerous.

2.) There are many traffic concerns.

3.) A park would provide quality family time.

A number of questions follow each letter. Answering these questions will help you to analyze the writing.
To the Editor,

Concerned citizens are all talking about the possible demolition of the stores on Elm Street in the center of town. These old historic buildings were once beautiful for sure, and it is a shame that they have not been maintained. The question is, should the town invest a million dollars to restore these buildings, or should the buildings be torn down to make way for some open space—a park for the residents to enjoy? Once we’ve examined all the facts, it becomes clear that we really must preserve these nostalgic and graceful landmarks.

Eastville is known both for its quaint and charming houses and shops and for the beautiful countryside surrounding them. In fact, this is what draws people to Eastville and why many of them have become life-long residents. While the three Victorian storefronts in question have peeling paint, loose shutters and rickety stairs, to many this is not considered an eyesore. In fact, many residents of Eastville believe this vintage look adds to the old-fashioned charm of downtown. Bulldozing these buildings to the ground would leave a gaping hole that will surely be filled with stores and franchises that belong to national chains. The unique town center of Eastville would be immediately transformed to Anytown, USA. As a lifelong resident of Eastville who hopes to grow old here, I believe that the promise of a park is insufficient compensation for the loss of the local architectural style and historic color that defines our town.

It is obvious that the people in Eastville are concerned about the economy and committed to supporting the small businesses in town. This support is crucial if we are to keep our downtown area vital and busy. I can understand that some citizens are concerned about the costs of the restoration. However, it will not only provide retail space for local businesses, but bring much-needed tax dollars to the town.
The streets will bustle with stylish restaurants, perhaps a trendy boutique or even a cozy coffee shop to stop in while running errands in town. The other advantage of this is that it would eliminate our dependence on the mall. I speak for myself and many of my neighbors when I say we are tired of having to travel to the Westville Mall every time we want to eat out or shop for a gift. Clearly, the cost of transforming these glorious old buildings would be balanced by the restoration’s boost to our local economy.

Opponents of restoration think that we need to preserve and promote open spaces such as town lands and forests and it is hard to disagree. After all, the environment is critically important to all of us. But, is a park in the center of downtown, where a diversity of wildlife couldn’t possible thrive, really an environmental plus? A more suitable place for a park would be in the beautiful woods and wetlands that surround Eastville. A more ecologically responsible plan might be to have our zoning board restrict new construction in undeveloped areas where animals, plants and birds make their homes. A wildlife refuge with nature trails, a picnic area and nature center would offer more environmental and recreational benefits than a small park squeezed between the downtown retail area.

We must think not only about the history of Eastville, but its future. By supporting the restoration of the ornate Victorian storefronts on Elm Street, we can preserve our town’s history while bolstering our economy and protecting our environment. Without a doubt, the people of Eastville will be proud that they preserved these historic buildings for many generations to come.

Sincerely,

Tom Green
Tom Green’s Letter to the Editor

To the Editor,

1.) Concerned citizens are all talking about the possible demolition of the stores on Elm Street in the center of town. These old historic buildings were once beautiful for sure, and it is a shame that they have not been maintained. The question is, should the town invest a million dollars to restore these buildings, or should the buildings be torn down to make way for some open space—a park for the residents to enjoy? Once we’ve examined all the facts, it becomes clear that we really must preserve these nostalgic and graceful landmarks.

2.) Eastville is known both for its quaint and charming houses and shops and for the beautiful countryside surrounding them. In fact, this is what draws people to Eastville and why many of them have become life-long residents. While the three Victorian storefronts in question have peeling paint, loose shutters and rickety stairs, to many this is not considered an eyesore. In fact, many residents of Eastville believe this vintage look adds to the old-fashioned charm of downtown. Bulldozing these buildings to the ground would leave a gaping hole that will surely be filled with stores and franchises that belong to national chains. The unique town center of Eastville would be immediately transformed to Anytown, USA. As a lifelong resident of Eastville who hopes to grow old here, I believe that the promise of a park is insufficient compensation for the loss of the local architectural style and historic color that defines our town.

3.) It is obvious that the people in Eastville are concerned about the economy and committed to supporting the small businesses in town. This support is crucial if we are to keep our downtown area vital and busy. I can understand that some citizens are concerned about the costs of the restoration. However, it will not only provide
retail space for local businesses, but bring much-needed tax dollars to the town. The streets will bustle with stylish restaurants, perhaps a trendy boutique or even a cozy coffee shop to stop in while running errands in town. The other advantage of this is that it would eliminate our dependence on the mall. I speak for myself and many of my neighbors when I say we are tired of having to travel to the Westville Mall every time we want to eat out or shop for a gift. Clearly, the cost of transforming these glorious old buildings would be balanced by the restoration’s boost to our local economy.

4. Opponents of restoration think that we need to preserve and promote open spaces such as town lands and forests and it is hard to disagree. After all, the environment is critically important to all of us. But, is a park in the center of downtown, where a diversity of wildlife couldn’t possible thrive, really an environmental plus? A more suitable place for a park would be in the beautiful woods and wetlands that surround Eastville. A more ecologically responsible plan might be to have our zoning board restrict new construction in undeveloped areas where animals, plants and birds make their homes. A wildlife refuge with nature trails, a picnic area and nature center would offer more environmental and recreational benefits than a small park squeezed between the downtown retail area.

5. We must think not only about the history of Eastville, but its future. By supporting the restoration of the ornate Victorian storefronts on Elm Street, we can preserve our town’s history while bolstering our economy and protecting our environment. Without a doubt, the people of Eastville will be proud that they preserved these historic buildings for many generations to come.

Sincerely,

Tom Green
Analyze Tom Green’s Letter to the Editor

1.) Number each paragraph.

2.) Draw a circle around the introduction paragraph and a box around the conclusion paragraph.

3.) Reread the introduction. Underline the issue in RED and the claim in BLUE.

4.) Underline each main reason sentence. In the margin beside each paragraph, write a word or two that summarizes the main reason the author is trying to make. Circle evidence provided to support that reason.

5.) Point out the evidence provided to support the main reason in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4.

6.) Circle each definitive word or phrase. (of course, certainly, etc.)

7.) Read the following detail: The creation of a number of small, tasteful restaurants or shops would also boost the economy by attracting out-of-town visitors.

In which paragraph would this belong? ____________________________________________

8.) Read the following detail: According to the Eastville Historical Society, these buildings represent the best of Victorian architecture of a century ago. In which paragraph would this belong? ____________________________________________

9.) Read the following detail: Has anyone considered the fact that an in-town park, with children playing near the main road could be dangerous? In which paragraph would this belong? ____________________________________________

10.) Go back to paragraph 2. Underline the phrase that acknowledges the point of view that the buildings are a mess. How does the author address this issue? (In other words, how does the author respond with a “yes, but…”?) ________________

__________________________________________
Objective: Students will experiment with opposing points of view and will see the value of acknowledging the alternate point of view and addressing it in a positive way.

Procedure:

1.) Reproduce and distribute p. 75, Acknowledge the Alternate Point of View.

2.) Read this through with the class. Have individual students take the parts of Mom, Chris, and Sarah. Have them read both dialogues aloud and discuss who presents the more convincing argument, Chris or Sarah.

3.) Introduce the concept of a “yes, but…” - and discuss alternative ways to present an opposing view.

4.) Go on to pp. 76-77, distributing copies of these pages to the class. Project these pages so that you can easily read and analyze Sarah’s letter to her mom. Use the questions on pp. 80-81 to guide you through a discussion about acknowledging and refuting the opposing view.

5.) The Challenge section on p. 82 is optional. This activity involves having students assume the opposing view, a point of view they are unlikely to agree with. This is an excellent activity for students who easily grasp the concept of the “yes, but…” and are ready to move forward. You may assign this to individual students, or to small groups of students. Discuss the THINK ABOUT IT section, which raises questions about point of view, and the ways in which life experience affects people’s opinions.

6.) EXTENSION ACTIVITY - Have the class read the editorial page of their local newspaper with an eye for hot issues that affect your community. Have them name the issues and discuss both sides. For homework, or classwork, have students write a rebuttal, with special emphasis on the “yes, but…” during which they acknowledge the views presented, and then refute those views.
Acknowledge the Alternate Point of View

Think about the last time you tried to change someone’s mind about something, perhaps your parent’s. Imagine that you want to stay out until 11:00 PM and your parents want you home by 10:00 PM. When they explain all of the reasons why they want you home by 10:00, what will you do? For each reason they give, you’ll come up with a “yes, but…” to encourage them to consider the validity of your viewpoint.

Further, if you’re smart, you’ll first acknowledge their point of view, then move on to the “yes, but…” And, you’ll phrase your “yes, but…” carefully and skillfully. Here are two examples. Whose approach would be more logical – Chris’ or Sarah’s – and why?

**Mom:** You know your curfew is 10:00.

**Chris:** Yes, but it isn’t a school night.

**Mom:** School night or not, 10:00 is late enough for a thirteen year-old to be out.

**Chris:** Yes, but everyone else will be out until 11:00.

**Mom:** I don’t care what everyone else is doing. I care about you.

**Chris:** Yes, but you have to give me a little privilege so you can see that I’m responsible.

**Mom:** You know your curfew is 10:00.

**Sarah:** I do realize that I have a 10:00 curfew, which is fair. I was hoping that we could make an adjustment for Friday night because it’s an unusual situation - and after all, it’s not a school night.

**Mom:** School night or not, 10:00 is late enough for a thirteen year-old to be out.

**Sarah:** I agree with you. That’s why I always try to be home on time. You know I’m responsible that way. So, don’t you believe I’ll also be responsible with an extended curfew just this once? Meghan’s mom said okay, and so did Maria’s mom. Maybe you want to talk to them about it.

**Mom:** I don’t care what everyone else is doing. I care about you.

**Sarah:** I know you care about me and that you want what’s best for me. That’s why I won’t disappoint you. You can trust me to be responsible with this. I won’t let you down.

What’s different about the second example? Go back to the second example and underline each phrase that Sarah uses in place of “yes, but….” that acknowledges and affirms her mother’s point of view. Now let’s see how Sara’s dialogue will translate into an argument letter to her mom. Watch for each logical phrase she uses instead of a plain old “yes, but…” Then answer the questions that follow the letter.
Dear Mom,

This Friday night there will be a party at Emily’s house. Her parents have agreed to have twenty kids there and they’re providing pizza, unlimited soda, snacks and ice cream with a variety of toppings. The party is from 7:00-11:00. There’ll be music, swimming and time to just hang out together and talk. I really want to go to the party, and it’s important to me to be able to stay until the end, but I know my curfew is 10:00. Since this is a special occasion, I’d like to ask you to extend my curfew until 11:00 on Friday. There are actually a number of reasons why I believe I should be trusted with this privilege.

I believe that a 10:00 curfew is fair and I always do my best to stick to it. Usually there is really no reason for me to be out later than 10:00. However, this Friday night is an unusual situation – a special occasion that isn’t likely to happen again. Since it’s not a school night, and it’s a one-time thing, it seems reasonable to extend the curfew until 11:00 just this once. I could check in with you at 10:00, and be ready for you to pick me up at 11:00 sharp. It is important for me to show you that I’m responsible, and I hope that this will be an opportunity for me to do that.

My best friends, Meghan and Maria, will be at the party until 11:00 and I’d like to be with them. Of course, I realize that this is not a good enough reason for me to stay until 11:00 and that you are primarily concerned about me, not about what others are doing or not doing. However, without a doubt, Meghan, Maria and I have a good track record of following the rules and Friday night would be no exception. I know that their parents talked a lot about allowing them to stay out until 11:00. Perhaps you might want to call them to see how they came to their decision, or even to arrange a car pool that night.

There will be lots of fun activities at the party, right up until the end. I know that parents worry about the kinds of things that might take place at a party, but
this is one party you won’t need to worry about. Emily’s parents will be home, and they’ve invited everyone’s parents to check in with them, or to stop by that night. They’ve arranged for Emily’s cousin, who is a D.J., to play music out by the pool all night. We can dance, request our favorite songs, or listen. The pizza will be delivered around 8:00 and Emily’s dad will be “life-guarding” at the built-in pool all night. Three hours just won’t be enough for a party like this, especially since the make-your-own sundae part of the party begins at 10:00.

As I get older I know I’ll be faced with many new experiences, and that each experience will be an opportunity for me to be responsible and mature – or not. Friday night’s party could be an opportunity for me to prove that I am ready to take on the increased responsibility of a later curfew. I am eager to show you that I can be responsible in small ways as well as bigger, more important ways. If you trust me with this later curfew, you can test how I’ll respond to the responsibilities that will come with dating, dances and high school activities. You’ve always taught me to rise to the occasion, and that the way in which we carry out the smallest task is the way in which we will approach larger tasks. The Friday night party is a great opportunity for me to apply the lessons I’ve learned from you.

I have demonstrated in the past that I am capable of making responsible decisions. For all the reasons chronicled here, please grant me the privilege of an extended curfew new Friday night. Surely, you will be impressed my maturity and sense of responsibility.

Your Responsible Daughter,

Sarah

PS. Don’t take my word for it - let me prove it to you.
Sarah’s Letter

Dear Mom,

1.) This Friday night there will be a party at Emily’s house. Her parents have agreed to have twenty kids there and they’re providing pizza, unlimited soda, snacks and ice cream with a variety of toppings. The party is from 7:00-11:00. There’ll be music, swimming and time to just hang out together and talk. I really want to go to the party, and it’s important to me to be able to stay until the end, but I know my curfew is 10:00. Since this is a special occasion, I’d like to ask you to extend my curfew until 11:00 on Friday. There are actually a number of reasons why I believe I should be trusted with this privilege.

2.) I believe that a 10:00 curfew is fair and I always do my best to stick to it. Usually there is really no reason for me to be out later than 10:00. However, this Friday night is an unusual situation – a special occasion that isn’t likely to happen again. Since it’s not a school night, and it’s a one-time thing, it seems reasonable to extend the curfew until 11:00 just this once. I could check in with you at 10:00, and be ready for you to pick me up at 11:00 sharp. It is important for me to show you that I’m responsible, and I hope that this will be an opportunity for me to do that.

3.) My best friends, Meghan and Maria, will be at the party until 11:00 and I’d like to be with them. Of course, I realize that this is not a good enough reason for me to stay until 11:00 and that you are primarily concerned about me, not about what others are doing or not doing. However, without a doubt, Meghan, Maria and I have a good track record of following the rules and Friday night would be no exception. I know that their parents talked a lot about allowing them to stay out until 11:00. Perhaps you might want to call them to see how they came to their decision, or even to arrange a car pool that night.

4.) There will be lots of fun activities at the party, right up until the end. I know that parents worry about the kinds of things that might take place at a party, but...
this is one party you won’t need to worry about. Emily’s parents will be home, and they’ve invited everyone’s parents to check in with them, or to stop by that night. They’ve arranged for Emily’s cousin, who is a D.J., to play music out by the pool all night. We can dance, request our favorite songs, or listen. The pizza will be delivered around 8:00 and Emily’s dad will be “life-guarding” at the built-in pool all night. Three hours just won’t be enough for a party like this, especially since the make-your-own sundae part of the party begins at 10:00.

5.) As I get older I know I’ll be faced with many new experiences, and that each experience will be an opportunity for me to be responsible and mature – or not. Friday night’s party could be an opportunity for me to prove that I am ready to take on the increased responsibility of a later curfew. I am eager to show you that I can be responsible in small ways as well as bigger, more important ways. If you trust me with this later curfew, you can test how I’ll respond to the responsibilities that will come with dating, dances and high school activities. You’ve always taught me to rise to the occasion, and that the way in which we carry out the smallest task is the way in which we will approach larger tasks. The Friday night party is a great opportunity for me to apply the lessons I’ve learned from you.

6.) I have demonstrated in the past that I am capable of making responsible decisions. For all the reasons chronicled here, please grant me the privilege of an extended curfew new Friday night. Surely, you will be impressed my maturity and sense of responsibility.

Your Responsible Daughter,

Sarah

P.S. Don’t take my word for it - let me prove it to you.
Analyze Sarah’s Letter

1.) Number each paragraph.

2.) Draw a circle around the introduction paragraph and a box around the conclusion paragraph.

3.) Reread the introduction. Underline the issue in RED, and the claim in BLUE.

4.) Underline each supporting reason sentence. In the margin beside each paragraph, write a word or two that summarizes the author’s supporting reason.

5.) Circle each definitive word or phrase. (of course, certainly, etc.)

6.) Read the following detail: They have rafts, tubes, and even a slide for everyone to use.

   In which paragraph would this belong? ________________________________

7) Read the following detail: It is said that there’s an exception to every rule, and this party seems to be that exception. In which paragraph would this belong?

   ____________________________________________________________________

8.) Go back to paragraph 2. Underline the phrase that acknowledges the alternate point of view that the usual 10:00 curfew is reasonable. How does the author address this issue? In other words, how does the author respond with a “yes, but...”?

   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
9.) Reread paragraph 3. Underline the phrase that acknowledges that “everyone else is doing it” is not an acceptable reason to extend the curfew. Explain the “yes, but...”.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

10.) Reread paragraph 4. How does the author refute the idea that things could happen at this party that would be unacceptable?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

11.) Reread the conclusion paragraph, paragraph 6. What does the author suggest that Sarah’s mother will have to lose by not extending the curfew?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

What does the author suggest that Sarah’s mother will gain by extending the curfew?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

12.) Before the author finished the final draft of this letter, she’d included the following sentence in her introduction: If you think that a 10:00 curfew is reasonable, then you are out of touch with reality! Why do you think she deleted it?

__________________________________________________________________________

13.) Summarize the author’s position: _______________________________________

The author wants to support her claim that ___________________________________

She believes that ____________________________________________________________

She goes on to describe how _________________________________________________

She explains that ____________________________________________________________

and ____________________________________________________________
SECTION 3: Audience Awareness

This section of the Argument Guide will provide opportunities for students to become aware of the importance of audience awareness and to practice a variety of techniques for acknowledging the alternate point of view and affirming the audience.

One of the most difficult challenges a writer has is to support a claim with logical reasons and evidence to support the reasons. The writer also wants to validate their claim in a way that will allow the reader to see the issue in a new way, to recognize that his/her opinion has relevance and is worth considering. Have you ever witnessed a conversation between two people from opposing political parties? Many times, because of their differing opinions, these conversations wind up becoming arguments in which each side angrily tries to berate the other’s point of view. Instead of persuading the other to look at something in a new way, the two have alienated each other, and each side becomes more firmly rooted in their own particular point of view or position.

Because of this, writing a convincing argument is challenging. The author needs to not only present many compelling facts, with evidence to support them, but must also have an awareness and a respect for the opposing view. When the author acknowledges the opposing view, and then uses that as a bridge to further some alternative thought, their argument will be more credible. To harshly criticize, belittle, or put down the opposing view is a surefire way to motivate your opponent to stop listening and hold fast to their own opinions.

Another way to think about this is for the author to thoroughly explore and address the “pros” and “cons” of any issue. The skillful argument writer will also try to figure out the basic beliefs, self interests, and desired outcomes of their audience. Acknowledging these beliefs and self interests is a wonderful way to affirm your audience before leading them gently to a new way of looking at the issue or viewing the situation. Yet another useful strategy is for the writer to make his/her voice more credible by identifying and recounting first-hand experiences that are relevant to the issue at hand. In argument writing, this is call “First-Hand Evidence”. “Second-Hand Evidence” includes quotes from experts, statistics and facts. The most competent writers use both.

The activities in this section provide opportunities for students to practice the art of affirmation and acknowledgment of audience. Students will be challenged to look at all sides of an issue, to make their claim while affirming and acknowledging the opposing view. In this way they can begin to present their own alternative viewpoint to an audience that has not been alienated, marginalized, or polarized into an unwillingness to hear the author’s point of view.
Evaluating the Arguments of Others

When we think of argument we might imagine of two people yelling at each other, both red in the face, emotions running high. The art of argument writing involves providing proof to support your claim without the emotion.

In argument writing you need to explore two sides of the issue or topic and to provide proof as to why one side is more reasonable than the other. That is why, when discussing the opposing view, you should not suggest that someone is stupid, or less than enlightened, or just can’t listen to reason. That kind of approach will cause the reader to dig their heels in, stop listening and dismiss your claim as unreasonable.

Since argument writing involves critical thinking, it is important to acknowledge the opposing point of view, and to use their point of view as a jumping off point to express your valid reasons.

How can you do this? The following sentence starters can help you to acknowledge an opposing viewpoint and to link it to your own point of view. In this way, your audience is not disregarded or dismissed.

**Opposing Point of View:** ______________. **My Point of View:** ______________.

Many people feel that ______________, but actually ______________.

Despite the fact that ______________, there ______________.

Although some people believe ______________, you’ll see why ______________.

I can understand the POV that ______________, but ______________.

It’s easy to see why ______________, however ______________.

I used to think that ______________, yet ______________.

Regardless of the fact that ______________, in my experience ______________.

Some people think that ______________, nevertheless ______________.

You might believe that ______________, still ______________.

On the next page there are a number of opposing viewpoints. Watch how some of these sentence starters can be used to acknowledge the opposing view and introduce your alternate view.
Evaluating the Arguments of Others - Examples

**Your Point of View:** Small local businesses provide better service than the big chain stores and deserve our patronage.

**The Opposing View:** You can’t beat the large chain stores for value, selection, and service.

In the following examples, notice the way the author uses language to first affirm or acknowledge the opposing view, and then to introduce the alternative point of view.

I used to think that nobody could beat the large chain stores for value, selection, and service, yet I have come to understand that small local businesses provide better service than the big chain stores and deserve our patronage.

or...

You might believe that nobody could beat the large chain stores for value, selection, and service; still, I’ve been surprised to discover that small local businesses provide better service than the big chain stores and deserve our patronage.

or...

I can understand the point of view that nobody could beat the large chain stores for value, selection, and service, but I’ve found that small local businesses provide better service than the big chain stores and deserve our patronage.

or...

It’s easy to see why people think that nobody could beat the large chain stores for value, selection, and service; however, I have realized that small local businesses provide better service than the big chain stores and deserve our patronage.
# Evaluating the Arguments of Others

## Acknowledge the Alternate Point of View - 2

Read these opposing viewpoints. Then, use the sentence starters to acknowledge the opposing view and state your own view. Write this acknowledgment two different ways. Feel free to add a word or phrase, or to alter the sentence starters to suit your needs.

**Your Point of View:** Having a dress code in school restricts our right to free expression.

**The Opposing View:** Enforcing a dress code ensures a respectful atmosphere in our schools.

### Opposing Point of View: ___________. My Point of View: ___________.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opposing Point of View</th>
<th>My Point of View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many people feel that ___________, but actually _________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite the fact that ___________, there _________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although some people believe ___________, you’ll see why _________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>I used to think that ___________, yet _________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regardless of the fact that ___________, in my experience _________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people think that ___________, nevertheless _________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You might believe that ___________, still, _________________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.) ______________________________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________________

2.) ______________________________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________________
Connotations - Choosing the RIGHT WORDS

Words carry meaning, both positive and negative. Imagine that two writers with opposing points of view are writing about the same issue or situation. Compare their word choice. Pay special attention to the bold-faced words.

**Issue: Should the town put in a skate park?**

**Writer #1: Opposes the idea:**

*Without a doubt, a skatepark here in Oakville will cause a myriad of problems.* The current proposal is an *impractical plan* and nothing more than a *pipe dream* for teens and their parents. This *debacle* will not only be a *nuisance* to neighbors, but may prove *hazardous and dangerous* to those using the facility, costing the town thousands in liability.

**Writer #2: Supports the idea:**

*Without a doubt, a skatepark here in Oakville will present a few challenges.* However, the current proposal for this *creative project* grew from a *shared vision* of teens and their parents. This *bold plan* would cause only *minimal inconvenience* to neighbors, and those using the facility would be faced with the *typical tolerable risks* normally associated with any athletic activity covered by the required liability insurance.

**Compare the language:**

- myriad of problems ........................................... a few challenges
- impractical plan ........................................... creative project
- pipe dream ................................................... shared vision
- debacle ...................................................... bold plan
- nuisance ........................................................ minimal inconvenience
- hazardous/dangerous ...................................... typical tolerable risks

Notice how the word choice colors each paragraph, sending a very different message!
Teacher Background:

When we think of “audience” we tend to limit our thinking to the actual person who might be reading our argument piece. If students are asked to write to their principal about the issue of a proposed “pay-to-play” policy in their schools, they tend to think of their audience as solely the principal.

Successful argument writers will always enlarge their audience to include anyone who has a vested interest in the issue. In this case, the extended audience might include school board members, student athletes, parents, teachers, sports spectators and fans, coaches, taxpayers. By addressing the concerns of all of these, the argument to the principal is strengthened exponentially. In other words, the author needs to ask, “What’s in it?” for all associated with the issue – this group becomes the extended audience.

Audience Awareness – Extend Your Audience, p. 177

Objective: Students recognize that the audience can be extended to anyone with a vested interest in the issue, thus, strengthening their arguments.

Procedure:

1.) Reproduce and distribute p. 177, Audience Awareness – Extend Your Audience. Discuss the idea of extending the intended audience in order to address multiple points of view around an issue. Read through student page 177 together. As you share the paragraph about the issue of “Pay to Play”, chart the members of the extended audience: school board members, student athletes, parents, teachers, sports spectators and fans, coaches, taxpayers.

2.) Discuss how each of the above members of the “extended audience” would be affected by this issue, and how the author uses this to strengthen his position.

3.) List the following issues on the board and ask students to generate a list of the extended audiences for each:

Issues:

- allowing candy machines in schools • allowing smoking in restaurants • having curfews for teens • requiring parent signatures on homework • allowing students to leave school for lunch • raising the driving age to 18 • sharing a room with a sibling • requiring community service for students
**Audience Awareness – Extend Your Audience**

Successful argument writers will always enlarge their audience to include *anyone who has a vested interest in the issue*. Think about the following issue: *Should students be required to pay for the extra-curriculum sports programs and teams they belong to?* (Pay to Play?) A student might write a letter to the principal to convince them that this is unfair, and it would be easy to assume, in this case, that the audience would be, solely, the principal.

However, the successful argument writer extends that audience. The *extended audience* includes anyone who might be affected by the issue. By addressing the concerns of all of these, the argument to the principal is strengthened. In other words, the author needs to ask, “What’s in it?” for everyone associated with the issue – they become the *extended audience*.

Read the paragraph below. Circle members of the extended audience and discuss “what’s in it?” for each of them.

*Everyone is concerned about how the “Pay-to-Play” proposal will affect our town. For years athletics have taught our students discipline, sportsmanship, and the satisfaction and cooperation that comes from working as a part of a team. Requiring students to pay for the privilege would deprive some students of this opportunity. Seeing the character building benefits that sports provide, concerned, empathetic parents and teachers agree that the criteria for participation in any learning experience should not be the ability to pay! Our coaches, who have dedicated so much time to the values and morale fiber of young people will tell you that it would be grossly unfair to turn away potentially promising athletes because their families have to choose between putting a uniform on their backs or dinner on the table. Why should our poorer students have to sacrifice more than those with larger pocketbooks? Limiting some student athletes affects our fans in terms of school spirit and the sense of frustration when their favorite players might be kept off the field. While taxpayers may want to see money budgeted primarily for academics, most would agree that the price we pay in morale and local pride in our young athletes would just be too high.*
**Teacher Background:**

Many people have strong opinions. But, when a person’s opinion is based on some kind of first hand experience relevant to the issue, we tend to be more open to their point of view. Their experience lends credibility to their arguments. We see this in editorials all the time, when the author explains some association that defines them as someone with a vested interest and legitimate experience base related to the issue.

When people identify themselves as a part of some credible group, it strengthens their argument. **Therefore, the next lesson plan helps students identify themselves with life experience, hobbies, interests, family or community relationships or roles that relate to the issue at hand.** This gives their voice more authority as they introduce evidence from personal experience into their argument writing.

**Example:**

Claim: *Soccer is the perfect team sport for cardio-vascular exercise.*

Evidence from personal experience: *As the captain of the middle school soccer team, I have seen my teammates build speed and endurance after just a week of daily practice on the field.*

See how the author uses his/her position as the captain of the middle school soccer team to add authority to the claim while introducing evidence from personal experience. In argument writing, this is called FIRST HAND EVIDENCE.

The next step is adding another voice of authority -- an expert who will support your claim.

**Example:**

*Coach Belter reports that during the course of a highly competitive game, players “usually run a total of 4-5 miles.”*

In argument writing, a quote from an expert is called SECOND HAND EVIDENCE. Statistics and facts cited from research fall into this category too. The best argument writing uses both First and Second Hand Evidence.

When writers identify themselves as part of a credible group, their point of view is more likely to be seen as valid. When they add yet another voice of authority, their claim gains even greater power. This next lesson helps students figure out how to bring FIRST HAND EVIDENCE -- their own life experiences -- to their argument writing and how to identify SECOND HAND EVIDENCE in the form of other voices of authority that they can quote.
Objective: Students identify themselves with the credible groups to which they belong and relate these to a variety of issues. They also lean to support their argument writing by adding quotes from others qualified to speak authoritatively on the same issue.

Procedure:

1.) Copy and distribute p. 180, You are Part of a Credible Group, and Who Am I?
   Starting with You are Part of a Credible Group, discuss the relationship between self-identity and the issues listed. Share the examples on the bottom of the page. Discuss how each writer uses their personal experience to gain credibility.

2.) Then, direct their attention to Who Am I? Read through the sample of one student author’s list. Point out that the author extends the list through the use of former and future associations. Have students list a number of issues that the author could address based on these associations.

3.) Provide students with a copy of p. 182, Name My Credible Group Associations. Ask them to focus on a variety of life experiences, and draw upon these to fill out their own credible group profile.

4.) Reproduce p. 183, What Makes You an Expert? and instruct students to refer to their Name My Credible Group Association, p. 182. They should refer to this in order to inform their work.
You are Part of a Credible Group

We all have associations. Life experiences, hobbies and interests that bring us face to face with related issues. For example, if the issue involves school, you might recount your own relevant experiences as a student to support your claim. Identifying yourself with a group with special experience The evidence you take from personal experience is called FIRST HAND EVIDENCE.

For example:

**If you take a position:**  
- To add a new wing onto the school  
- To ban smoking in all public places  
- To protect wildlife  
- To fight budget cuts to arts education

**You might identify yourself as:**  
- a hardworking student  
- child of a lung cancer survivor  
- a life-long conservationist  
- a school orchestra member

Here’s how authors use this technique:

*As a life-long conservationist* who has worked to clean up our local parks and open spaces, I have seen, first-hand, the benefits of protecting and preserving our wildlife.

Some may say that banning smoking in public places violates individual rights. **But watching my mother suffer with lung cancer** after years of breathing second hand smoke at the shop where she works, smoking outdoors seems a small price to pay.
Who Am I?

When writing an argument essay, it’s important to take advantage of your “credible groups” and associations. We all have a lot more experience than we think. Look at this student’s list, below. Then, on the bottom of the page, list a number of issues that this author could speak to with credibility based on these associations and experiences.

I am:

an honor roll student  a future college student  a pianist
Spanish Club member  soccer team member  shell collector
responsible daughter  future parent  dog owner
sailing enthusiast  future taxpayer  asthma sufferer
informed consumer  movie-goer  older sister
avid reader  video game expert  loyal friend
animal lover  expert baker  former elementary schooler
devoted granddaughter  Rhode Island resident  American of Italian descent

Possible Related Issues: ______________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
Name my Credible Group Associations

Think about the things that define you as a person – your family associations, your community and school, the roles you play, activities you take part in, interests, hobbies, and accomplishments. Use the categories, below, to help you make a list of your “credible group associations.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Associations</th>
<th>Activities I Enjoy</th>
<th>Special Causes/Interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>Sports I Participate in</td>
<td>Music/Art/Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and Community</td>
<td>Special Accomplishments</td>
<td>Health Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Experiences</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Pet Ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Makes You an Expert?

Read the list of issues, below. Select three issues to which you can gain credibility through your associations and experiences with credible groups. List these beside the issues.

School Improvement?

Increase taxes?

Budget cuts for school sports?

Adopt a dog?

Build a Skatepark?

Get a part-time job?

Go snorkeling?

Buy a new computer?

Lengthen the school day?

Year round schools?

Go snowboarding?

Buy a parrot?

Take a trip to Mexico?
Objective: Students learn how to identify experts whom they can quote to add powerful evidence to their argument writing.

Procedure:

1.) Reproduce Calling in Other Experts student reference page, project and read through together and discuss.

2.) Project the Name That Expert - 1 chart on the following page, brainstorm ideas about who might be quoted to support the specific claims. Fill in the missing boxes on the chart. The first one is done for you as an example.

3.) On another day, copy and distribute the Name That Expert - 2 chart, divide students into small cooperative groups and have them complete the chart. You might also chose to have students work independently.
You’ve learned how your own associations can bring credibility to your point of view and how to incorporate FIRST HAND EVIDENCE from your personal experience in your argument writing. Now it’s time to call in other experts.

Your argument writing will be extra powerful if it includes SECOND HAND EVIDENCE - quotes that bring the authority of others to support your claim.

**For example:**

**Your claim:** Computer games are addictive and should come with warnings.

**You might identify yourself as:** An avid player of video games.

And introduce first-hand evidence from personal experience:

As an avid player of video games, I understand how hard it is to stop playing once you’ve started.

Support it further with second-hand evidence:

Dr. Hall, a neurologist at Eastville Hospital says, “Neuroscience finally has a scientific explanation for this phenomena.”

Notice, the first credible voice comes from you, the second from Dr. Hall. You will usually have to do some research in order to find appropriate experts to quote. You’ll learn more about that later.
### Name That Expert - 1

Brainstorm ideas about who you could provide an expert opinion about these issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your claim:</th>
<th>You might identify yourself as:</th>
<th>You might quote:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important to protect wildlife.</td>
<td>A nature lover</td>
<td>The director of your local nature center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government should provide aid to the elderly.</td>
<td>Somone who cares for their disabled grandparent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for arts education is critical.</td>
<td>A school orchestra member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community inclusion of people with disabilities is very important.</td>
<td>The brother of a child with a developmental disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need to add a new wing to the school.</td>
<td>A hardworking student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody should learn a foreign language.</td>
<td>A student who plans to study abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our town should sponsor a bluegrass festival.</td>
<td>A banjo player</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowboarding takes more athletic skill than skiing.</td>
<td>A former skier turned avid snowboarder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Detail Generating Questions

What does that “look” like? Show, Don’t Tell!

Instead of TELLING: These buildings should be demolished.
SHOW the audience what you mean:
These run-down, dilapidated buildings should be demolished.

Why is that important to your argument?

Ex. What does your audience have to gain by agreeing?
Public safety is important to everybody and the demolition of these crumbling buildings will certainly make our town a safer place.

Ex. What does the audience have to lose by disagreeing?
Those concerned with town finances should realize how the proposal to renovate these crumbling buildings will completely break the town budget and might even force us to raise taxes.

Can you give a specific example?

Ex. Other towns have wasted a lot of money trying to restore old buildings.
Instead, use a SPECIFIC example: Just ask the people of neighboring Montgomery - After budgeting $500,000 for restorations on their town center, they wound up spending over 1.5 million.

Did you acknowledge the opposing view and follow it with a “yes, but...”?

Ex. Of course it is admirable to want to preserve historical architecture, but these buildings are too far gone for preservation or restoration.

Did you support your claim with first hand evidence?

(Remember, first hand evidence is information you gathered yourself.)

Ex. I polled my 7th grade classmates and found that 38 out of 40 agreed that the buildings should be demolished.

What facts, statistics and expert opinions can I bring to my argument?

(Remember, this is called second-hand evidence, evidence that comes from research.)

Ex. Even John Powers, head of our town board, says “If we were going to restore those buildings it would have made sense to do so years ago. The cost today will be prohibitive.”
How do the Detail Generating Questions Improve Paragraphs?

Read and compare the following two paragraphs. The first simply states the author’s claim and some related facts. The author of the second paragraph has used the detail generating questions to provide evidence for the same claim.

1.) The school should provide every student with a laptop computer. It isn’t fair that only students who can buy their own laptop can have one. Taking notes is easier on a laptop. You can spell check and use the encyclopedia without leaving your seat. And, every student needs to be computer literate, and this is impossible unless you can practice every day. Having these skills can get you a better job.

2.) From facilitating quick communication through e-mail to making last minute travel arrangements, we depend on our computers in a multitude of different ways. It is unrealistic to believe that any one of us will be able to compete in the job market unless we are computer literate. As the daughter of a single mother, I can’t afford my own laptop computer and the only time I get to practice my computer skills is at the local library, which closes early in the evenings. This makes it very hard for me to use the computer for my school assignments. That is why it’s so important for schools to provide their students with lightweight, laptop computers that have word processing and research capabilities. Students could easily carry their computers from class to class so that the advantages of technology (spell check, thesaurus, encyclopedia, dictionary, and even a calculator) are available to all. If schools provided laptop computers, every graduate, regardless of their own ability to afford this privilege, would have sufficient computer skills to offer prospective employers and increase their chance at getting hired. It is true that laptop computers would be a significant expense to the school, but it is a critically important investment in the future of students that will reflect well on our whole community for many years to come. Further, large corporations like GE and Coca Cola might be willing to lend financial support to get laptops into schools with diverse student populations such as ours. In fact, our principal, Dr. Maryanne Brown says she’s already “seeking funding not only from corporations but from several grant programs that specialize in bringing cutting-edge technology into public schools.” Providing laptop computers to all students is an important way to help everybody achieve to the best of their ability in the classroom. Not only are laptops an invaluable aid to learning today, but they are essential in the workplace of tomorrow.
Think About It:

1.) What does it look like?
   Lightweight, with word processing and research capabilities.

2.) Why is that important to your argument?
   Convenient, available to all, builds computer skills that employers need, increased likelihood of being hired.

3.) Did you give a specific example?
   Large corporations like GE and Coca-Cola.

4.) Acknowledge the opposing view:
   It’s expensive, but a critically important investment.

5.) Support your claim with first-hand evidence:
   As the daughter of a single mother, I can’t afford my own...

6.) Bring facts, statistics, expert opinions to the argument:
   Dr. Maryanne Brown says she’s....
Amp Up Your Evidence - 1

Read the following sentences. **The author is providing evidence to support a claim that it is a safe decision to cancel school on snowy days.** REVISE each sentence as per the instruction in parentheses.

1.) School should be canceled on days when we have snow. (What does a snowy day look like?)

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___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2.) Winter weather is hazardous to drivers, passengers and pedestrians. (Give a specific example.)

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3.) I am afraid to ride on the bus when it is snowy. (Add first-hand evidence from personal experience or other information you have gathered on your own.)

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4.) Cancellations need to appear on the local TV station. (Why is this important?)

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5.) It is important to get in the required 180 days of school. (Add a “yes, but…”)

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

6.) Ice and snow can cause traffic problems. (Add a fact, statistic or an expert opinion.)

___________________________________________________________________________
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Revise this Paragraph Using the Detail Generating Questions - 1

Babysitting can be an excellent way for teens to earn money. (Can you add first-hand evidence?) It is a very responsible job, requiring that the babysitter keep a baby or toddler safe and happy. (What does that look like?) Babysitting can also be fun. (add a specific example.) A young teen cannot just get a job in a store or restaurant and this is really hard. (Why is this important to your argument?) Your local YMCA will probably offer babysitting courses. (Can you bring a quote, fact or statistic in here?) Your neighbors will thank you and so will your parents. (Acknowledge the opposing view followed by a “yes, but…”). End with a concluding sentence.)

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*Teacher page - sample revision - p. 209.
What is first-hand evidence?

**Vocabulary:**

**First-Hand Evidence:** Evidence you gather yourself through one of these five techniques:

1. **Personal Experience:** anything you have learned through your own life experiences.

2. **An Anecdote:** a short, explicit story used to illustrate a main argument.

3. **Experiment:** a procedure you follow in an attempt to learn something.

4. **Survey:** a collection of questions, administered verbally and used to investigate the experiences and opinions of people.

5. **A Questionnaire:** a set of printed questions, often with multiple choice answers, used as a research method.

Ex. Read the sample paragraph below, noting the use of first-hand evidence.

**CLAIM: Dogs and cats must be spayed or neutered.**

The overpopulation of dogs and cats is a problem that causes these gentle, domesticated creatures untold suffering. As a volunteer at our local animal shelter, I have seen these animals arrive at the shelter vastly underweight, infested with ticks and fleas, sick and frightened. According to a survey conducted by shelter volunteers, an estimated one in four needs to be euthanized despite the best efforts of veterinarians.
Find the First Hand Evidence

Read through the paragraphs below. Underline the first-hand evidence in red. Just beneath the paragraph, you’ll see five techniques used to generate first hand evidence. Underline the technique(s) used in the paragraph. Sometimes there are two.

CLAIM: Good dental hygiene can help prevent periodontal disease.

Periodontal disease is very common among adults and easily avoided by making good dental hygiene a habit when you are young. However, only one in five middle-school students report flossing on a regular basis and nearly 30% say they do not receive regular dental checkups and cleanings. When I saw my father suffering from the pain of a lingering gum infection, I made a commitment to establishing these essential health habits right now.

A survey     A questionnaire     Personal experience     An experiment     An anecdote

CLAIM: Visitors to the Saguara Desert should be limited.

The Saguara Desert of the Arizona is one of the most unique ecosystems on earth. It is also among the most delicate and the multitude of hikers, bikers and horseback riders crowding its trails are threatening the survival of the giant Saguara cactus that grow only in this locale. When surveyed, 80% of middle-school students said they would support a law limiting the number of people allowed into the desert habitat each day, even if that meant waiting for as long as a month for their chance to see the Saguara cactus up close. An additional 10% said they’d wait for a week.

A survey     A questionnaire     Personal experience     An experiment     An anecdote

CLAIM: Use of social media reduces interaction among family members.

Parents and teachers seem really concerned about the amount of time teenagers spend on the computer using Facebook and other social media. Is it really as bad for us as they think? Four of my 7th grade classmates and I agreed to give up social media for a week and track the alternate ways in which we used our time. The results of this experiment were very eye-opening.

A survey     A questionnaire     Personal experience     An experiment     An anecdote
Objective: Students learn how to access expert quotes, facts and statistics using an online key word search, when and how to cite sources and how to take notes from research.

Procedure:

1.) Copy and distribute p. 231, Conducting an Online Search. Read through together and discuss. Then, copy and distribute p. 232, Experimenting with Key Words. Circulate and offer guidance as students complete this activity independently. When they are finished, discuss the results of their key word experiments – noting which key words yielded the most results and which generated the kind of information needed to support this claim.

2.) Explain to students that their next step is to cull through the information their key word search generated and find the facts that will support their claim. Copy and distribute pp. 233-234, Citing Sources student reference sheets and review with students. Project p. 235, To Cite or Not to Cite and complete as a class. (See if students notice that the sentences that do require citation do not actually include the fact or statistic – why, because if it did, it would need to be cited here.)

3.) Project the student reference sheet p. 236, Taking and Interpreting Notes and read together. Then, have students complete p. 237, Take Some Notes either independently or in small groups.

4.) Copy and distribute p. 238, Taking Notes from Online Resources. Have students work in pairs to complete using the results from their key word experiments. Project and review a few strong examples.
Conducting an Online Search

There is a multitude of information available online and you can easily access it using a search engine such as Google, Bing or Yahoo. However, not all of the information you’ll find is helpful when you’re researching a claim for argument writing. The trick is knowing how to uncover the facts, statistics and expert quotes you need. To do that, your first step is conducting an effective key word search.

Here’s how:

1.) Identify your issue and develop your claim.

2.) Go to the search engine of your choice.

3.) Type in words related to the issue and the claim. The more specific, the better as specific key words narrow your search and yield more appropriate information.

   For example, if you are researching a claim that carrying heavy backpacks causes back pain in children, some of your key words would be: backpacks, back pain, children. If you used just “backpacks” as your key word, your search would connect you with many, many merchants eager to sell you a backpack, and that’s not what you’re looking for.

4.) Use the + (plus) symbol to further narrow your search. This ensures that your search finds pages with all the words you’re looking for: for example, heavy backpacks + back pain + children

5.) Use quotation marks. Putting your key words into quotation marks turns it into a “phrase search” and brings up pages that have the terms in the exact order of the words in quotations. Try searching “quotes from pediatricians about heavy backpacks,” “facts about children and back pain,” “statistics about weight of children’s backpacks.” When you use this strategy to narrow your search, only sites that provide exactly that information will appear.
Experimenting with Key Words

You are researching a claim that space exploration is vital to our future. Which key words do you think would be most effective?

Exploration

Space exploration

Space exploration + the future

“Benefits of Space Exploration”

Space Explorers

“Quotes from Space Explorers”

“Quotes about Space Exploration and the future”

Now try it. As you enter the key word(s) into your search engine, see how many results or “hits” you get. Write that number next to each key word. Which key word, or set of key words narrowed your search most effectively? Which connected you with the most reliable sources? (Please note: there are no definitive answers and the number of hits is going to vary from day to day.)
Putting it All Together – 3

You’ve learned a variety of techniques to help you to bring powerful evidence to your argument writing. Here is your menu of detail generating questions and techniques to choose from. Effective writers combine all of these in their writing. Revise the passage at the bottom of the page using a variety of these techniques.

Remember, research will uncover expert quotes, facts and statistics to support your claim. Use the Research Notes to organize the information you gather from research.

• What does it look like?
• Can you give a specific example?
• Why is that important to your argument?
• What will your reader gain by agreeing?
• What will your reader lose by disagreeing?
• Did you acknowledge the opposing view and follow it with a “yes, but…”?
• Did you support your claim with first-hand evidence?
• Have you brought expert opinions, facts and statistics to your argument?

Buying clothes online is the best way to shop. You can browse through thousands of catalogues. When you go to the mall, you’re limited to the seven or eight stores that you like. You don’t need to worry about when the stores are open – you can shop online any time of the day or night, 365 days a year. It is fun to wait for your package in the mail, delivered to your door.
Powerful Leads for Argument Writing

This author’s challenge is to support a claim that joining a gym is the best way to get the exercise you need to stay healthy. Notice the way each type of lead is used to draw the reader in and introduce the issue. Notice too how that claim, while fundamentally the same in each example, changes slightly as a result of the lead.

Each type of lead is defined and followed by an example. The leads appear in italics and the claims are underlined.

• A DESCRIPTIVE SEGMENT: Show your reader what he has to gain or lose by painting a vivid picture.

  Ex. He sprints forward, muscles rippling, easily taking long, graceful strides. Breathing deeply, his heart pumps oxygen to his blood, and energy flows through him, carrying him on. Every part of his body performs like a component of a well-oiled machine. He crosses the finish line of the marathon, a smile on his face. This is not a high school track star; or an Olympic athlete. It is a seventy year old man who has made exercise a regular part of his life. Joining a gym is the best way to get the regular exercise that will safeguard health today and into the future.

• AN EXPERT QUOTE OR A TESTIMONIAL: Quoting an expert or providing testimony from an authority is a powerful way to set the stage for your argument. Be sure to identify your expert and describe his or her credentials.

  Ex. “I start every day with an exercise regime, and my local gym makes this easy and enjoyable for me,” says Dr. Ted Smith, a heart specialist who has seen first-hand, the effects a lack of exercise can have on the heart and lungs. All health conscious people should consider joining a gym.

• AN ANECDOTE: Use an anecdote to introduce your issue. Your short, personal story should be compelling and clear.

  Ex. year, I received an awesome gift – but I didn’t think so at the time. My dad, bought me a membership to a local gym. I was about fifteen pounds overweight, and never considered myself an athletic type. I pushed myself to attend and was pleasantly surprised to find that I loved it. I have been going to the gym for two months, feel better about myself and have lost ten of those extra pounds. Joining a gym is the best way to get and stay in shape.
• A STATISTIC: The author can present powerful evidence in the form of a number, percentage or ratio.

   Ex. According to the American Heart Association, every year 250,000 Americans die of sudden cardiac arrest. In fact, that equates to 700 deaths a day. However, exercise is one way to maintain a healthy heart. Joining a gym is an easy way to get the exercise necessary to promote healthier, longer lives.

• A STATEMENT OF CONCERN: Find a common concern (one that both sides share) that relates to the issue.

   Ex. Health is perhaps the one thing people value more than anything else, including money, possessions or power. Thus, it makes sense that everybody wants to maintain a trim, agile body as well as a healthy heart and lungs. One of the best ways to do so is to join a gym and engage in regular physical exercise.

• EMBRACE A HIGH IDEAL: Who could disagree with a high ideal, standard, or value?

   Ex. A healthy body is a precious gift that we can never take for granted. We care for our cars, our homes and our possessions. We should do at least as much to care for and respect our bodies. Joining a gym makes it easy to get the regular exercise that our bodies need to stay strong and healthy.

• RESULTS FROM A SURVEY, QUESTIONNAIRE OR EXPERIMENT:
Evidence generated by the author to support the claim.

   Ex. When surveyed, four out of five adults admitted that they rarely found time for regular exercise; and nearly 85% cited lack of time as the primary reason why they weren’t more active. Joining a gym is an easy way to fit regular exercise into a busy schedule.
Revise Each Lead - 2

Read each introduction paragraph. First, circle the author’s claim. Then, notice that the author has written a weak or nonexistent lead. Revise each introduction so that the lead is interesting enough to encourage the reader to read on (even if they disagree with the view point communicated by the claim). Finally, indicate the type of lead or leads you used in the margin beside your revision.

1.) Motorcycles are really cool and cheap to run. You can get around town easily and look cool. Motorcycles should be encouraged because they reduce traffic and use less gasoline than cars.

Your revision: ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Type of lead(s) you used: ____________________________________________________

2.) Some kids watch too much TV. They get bored and just veg out on the couch. Limiting TV viewing for young children is obviously the way to go.

Your revision: ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Type of lead(s) you used: ____________________________________________________
Conclusion Paragraphs

The conclusion paragraph in an argument essay serves an important purpose. It is the author’s last chance to present the three main reasons that support the validity of his or her claim.

**Just like introduction paragraphs, conclusions too have three components:**

1.) A concise restatement of the main reasons. You can present the three reasons as equally important or, if you believe one is particularly compelling, you might choose to highlight it as the primary reason.

2.) A compelling statement emphasizing the validity of the claim. This could be a general warning about the consequences of taking the opposing viewpoint, or a brief description of the benefits of agreeing.

3.) A confident closing sentence incorporating a strong definitive phrase.

It is important to avoid a redundant, boring restatement of the main reasons at the end and to use vivid language throughout. Here are two conclusions to compare. Which is more effective? Why?

1.) So now you know why it’s important that our town get a pool. Adults can swim laps. Parents can rent it for kids’ birthday parties. You could take swimming lessons there. Everybody will like our community pool.

2.) For people old and young, a community pool is a wonderful place to gather for everyday and special occasion fun and exercise. The pool will also provide expert swimming instruction to people of all ages, allowing them to safely enjoy water sports for a lifetime. Admittedly, building a municipal pool is expensive, but it is a long-term investment in the health and well-being of our community. Sparkling clean and heated for year-round use, our indoor community pool will most certainly become the place where we meet our friends and neighbors for a relaxing, refreshing swim.

Notice the concise restatement of the main reasons, the descriptive language and the definitive phrase in the concluding sentence of the second example.
Techniques For Writing Memorable Argument Conclusions

• **RESTATE YOUR THREE MAIN REASONS**
  Keep it concise, but if you feel that one of your main reasons is significantly more compelling than the others, highlight it.

• **USE VIVID LANGUAGE THROUGHOUT**
  Descriptive words and action verbs make your conclusion memorable.

• **DESCRIBE THE BENEFITS OF AGREEING WITH, OR THE DISADVANTAGES OF OPPOSING THE CLAIM.**
  Remember, this is your last chance to convince readers of the validity of your claim.

• **USE A DEFINITIVE WORD OR PHRASE**
  End your argument essay with a tone of authority by using a definitive phrase such as:
  - Certainly
  - Surely
  - Above all
  - Especially
  - Most assuredly
  - Undoubtedly
  - Unquestionably
  - Obviously

• **OTHER EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES:**
  Consider ending your argument essay with a well-chosen statistic, fact or quote.
  Think about ending with an anecdote telling what sparked your interest in this topic and what you learned from researching it.

  * These options are not appropriate for most of the activities that follow. Consider using them when you are writing about issues of your choice and you have actually done the required research. Notice, how these strategies are used in the Reality TV example that follows and keep them in mind for the future.